

An Editorial

Does Evil Lurk In Our Community?

by Marc DePree



Charles Jordan

A recent [breaking news report](#), “Another (Dangerous?) USM Professor Steps Forward,” published at usmnews.net, reminded me of the [apparent ease](#) with which University of Southern Mississippi faculty are accused of being dangerous. Apparently, there’s an epidemic at USM of “dangerous people.”

All too often hidden in the background are the mobbers, the "colleagues" who lurk behind the scenes and act in an effort to destroy the lives and careers of colleagues with whom they disagree. In Patty Munn’s deposition, she insisted that a colleague must be a **“person who views the world in the correct manner.”**

Hidden intolerance should be revealed. Why should those who are mobbed get all the attention and the horrendous publicity that inevitably accompanies accusations of "dangerous" behaviors? Those who mob deserve to be pulled from the darkness where they lurk and be seen in the bright light of sunshine for what they are.

And Charles Jordan, like the others, has a special personal reason for joining the mobbing. His intolerance is that rules and laws are not applicable to his behavior or his friends’.

Charles Jordan

I did not personally know Charles Jordan, currently Professor at the School of Accountancy of the College of Business at the University of Southern Mississippi, but he was not concerned about my being dangerous. So much for the Munn/Jackson/Anderson/Posey hysteria and panic about a “Virginia Tech” danger about to “snap.”

Jordan had a personal problem. As a member of the reaccreditation committee, he had been caught plagiarizing another school’s documents it had submitted to the AACSB. Colleagues and I had questioned the propriety of submitting plagiarized documents to the AACSB. He was on a

mission to clean his “skirts” of wrongdoing by joining a mobbing to have me fired. Discrediting me would make his misconduct seem as though it didn’t really happen.

I was a lead researcher in a case study that observed the choices Jordan and USM administrators took covering up his and their plagiarism. (An additional case of plagiarism caught during our AACSB reaccreditation was also a subject of our case research and it will be reported in another story in this series.)

I did get to know Jordan professionally when we observed his behavior and other faculty and administrators who were caught copying others’ words “without proper citation.” “Copying without proper citation” is the phrase Jordan used to describe his own behavior. He used the phrase when he asked permission to copy another’s words “without proper citation,” after he had been caught plagiarizing their school’s AACSB submission documents. That’s right. He asked for permission after he was caught. He reluctantly admitted guilt in his deposition, which follows below. Consider the consequences of his behavior: How would you evaluate a student you just caught plagiarizing another’s paper and who justified it by saying that he got permission from the person he had copied “without proper citation.”

Jordan is saying, “Okay, you caught me plagiarizing, but I got the true author’s permission to copy. Permission, in Jordan’s warped view of the world, makes plagiarism proper. We recommend that readers review the case studies: “Is Accreditation a Reliable Authority on Academic Quality” and “University and AACSB Diversity” available free at <http://ssrn.com/author=397169>

Deposition of Charles Jordan

The following is the actual sworn testimony of Charles Jordan, taken on July 2, 2008, in the case, *DePree v. University of Southern Mississippi* (Q. is my attorney's questions directed to Jordan; A. is Jordan's responses.):

- Q. Okay. Why did you not include anything [in you letter to fire DePree] about being physically afraid of Dr. DePree?
- A. Because the main thing that was on my mind was accreditation. We had -- we had -- I had just spent literally hundreds of hours working on [AACSB] accreditation. And that was -- that was at that point my primary concern.
- Q. Okay. Now tell me how it is that you came to compose the letter [to fire DePree]
- .
- A. Well, I think I just answered that question earlier about the accreditation issues... So I wrote a letter... concerning the issues related to accreditation...
- Q. What did you know specifically about the intended use of the letter?

- A. Well, it was my understanding that the letter would be to resolve an issue. That issue in my letter is performance in relation to accreditation...
- Q. Okay. Thank you. In your first paragraph of this letter, you state that you wanted something done about Dr. DePree's repeated efforts.
- A. Uh-huh.
- Q. What was it that you wanted done?
- A. If you'll look in my final paragraph, it pretty much sums that up. The last sentence in the last paragraph says take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that faculty members do not work against us in our reaffirmation [of AACSB accreditation] efforts.
- Q. Do you have any knowledge of AACSB's rules, regulations, policies?
- A. Do I have knowledge of them. I have knowledge of some of their standards --
- Q. Okay.
- A. -- for accreditation. I have some knowledge of that.
- Q. Okay. Are you in a position to say that Marc DePree violated any rules, regulations, standards, policies of the AACSB in doing what he did that you complain of in this letter? [What DePree did was (1) after working internally within USM to resolve Jordan's and others' plagiarism, and, (2) after USM administrators and some faculty refused to discuss plagiarism with DePree and likeminded colleagues who were also concerned with misconduct of Jordan and others, then (3) to report Jordan's and others' violations of AACSB standards, including standards about misconduct like plagiarism, to the AACSB.]
- A. No. I suspect that he did not violate policies of the AACSB...
- Q. Do you know what Dr. DePree's two grievances regarding plagiarism to the AACSB were about?
- A. I know **vaguely**, yes. I know what they're about.
- Q. Okay. What are they about?

- A. Well, the one I know more than the other. One deals with the participating and supporting faculty definition [copied from Central Missouri State University “without proper citation”—his term which is revealed in his deposition below]. That's the one I'm more familiar with.
- Q. Okay. And how are you more familiar with that one?
- A. Because I'm the one that developed [copied] those -- those definitions.
- Q. Okay. And did Dr. DePree attempt to bring these issues to your attention or to the attention of other people within the school, college, or university prior to taking the AACSB grievance?
- A. It was never -- he never approached me directly with it, no. [At that time, we didn't know Jordan was the one who copied another school's documents “without proper citation.”]
- Q. Did he approach anybody to your knowledge?
- A. To my knowledge, no.
- Q. Are you familiar with the term research ombudsman--
- A. Yes.
- Q. -- at the University of Southern Mississippi?...
- Q. Okay. And do you know whether or not there was an official reporting out or communication of this determination by the research ombudsman?
- A. No, I do not know that.
- Q. Do you feel like Dr. DePree if he believed or suspected that these actions constituted plagiarism what actions do you believe he was required to take?
- A. Well, if he truly felt they were -- they were plagiarism, then it's my opinion he should have acted at the -- at the faculty level and should have expressed concern.
- Q. You're saying if he felt?
- A. Uh-huh.
- Q. Are you aware that it would have been contrary to the rules and regulations of the university for Dr. DePree to have consulted with the faculty concerning these matters?

A. No....

Q. You ever discuss Dr. DePree with Dean Doty?

A. I recall one conversation I had with -- well, actually two conversations.

Q. Okay. And when were they?

A. They were -- one was the fall of '06. And another one was actually during the AACSB visit or the visit was almost over. It was either the last day of it or the very next day after that.

Q. Okay. And what -- what did you and Doty talk about in the fall of '06?

A. Well, in the fall of '06, we had seen or I had seen on Dr. DePree's website -- I had not been to his website in -- in quite a while...So I went to Doty and just asked Doty, I said, do you -- I said, have you read DePree's website lately. And he said, yes. I said, have you seen his article on the plagiarism. He said, yes. And I asked him, do you know what it's in reference to. And he said, no. He asked me if I knew. And I said, well, I don't really know what it is. I said, he could be referring to those participating supporting faculty documents [I copied without proper citation]. And so the dean just said, well, you know, just -- we have implied permission to use them, just -- just send an e-mail asking for expressed permission to use them. And that was -- and that was the -- pretty much the extent -- the extent of that conversation...

Q. Why did it fall to you to get permission to use [copy “without proper citation”] this material?

A. I'm sorry. Why did it fall to me?

Q. To get permission to use this material after the fact [of getting caught plagiarizing them].

A. You're asking why we sent that e-mail? Is that what you're asking?

Q. I'm asking why were you the person chosen to seek permission?

A. Because I had been the -- I had been the person that visited Central Missouri State. I had been the person that Central Missouri State provided those definitions to. They had provided them to me.

Q. Did you have permission to use [copy them “without proper citation”] those prior to your use of them?

- A. There certainly -- there certainly was implied permission because that's the whole purpose of the -- of the peer visitation was to benchmark and use best practices and find out what other universities were -- were doing [so we could copy the other schools submission to AACSB "without proper citation"].
- Q. And when you say you share information, did y'all exchange that information in a particular format?
- A. Most of the information was exchanged in hard copy format... I told the dean [at Central Missouri] that the only thing that we had not yet developed at USM was -- was the definition of participating and supporting faculty...
- Q. And who was that dean?
- A. That was -- that was Jack Elfrink.
- Q. And where is he now?
- A. I believe he is now at Western Illinois University.
- Q. And have you discussed with him whether or not he intended to give you permission to use or adapt [copy "without proper citation"] that definition?
- A. I have not -- I have not spoken with him personally, no.
- Q. You know anyone who has?
- A. No.
- Q. When you requested the information, did you tell them or inform them that you were doing so with an eye to potentially using or adapting or borrowing [copy] their information ["without proper citation"]?
- A. I did not tell them that specifically...
- Q. Dr. Jordan, I'm gonna hand you a document...we're now at the third page.
- A. Okay. This -- this one, this e-mail is an e-mail it's a response from Joan Neal-Mansfield, who was the dean at Central Missouri State at the time that I e-mailed her asking her for permission to use the definitions **without proper citation**.
- Q. Okay. Also there's a letter that we don't have here because you wrote her back and

thanked her for her permission [to copy Central Missouri State's documents "without proper citation"]--

A. Uh-huh.

Q. -- and told her that a formal letter would not be required.

A. That's correct.

Below is an excerpt from our case study which includes documentation supporting the conclusions that Jordan and other faculty plagiarized documents and submitted them in support of USM's College of Business reaccreditation [Some documents had to be acquired through the Mississippi Open Records law.]

USM's College of Business Academic Integrity Policy included a definition of plagiarism: copying words, concepts, or ideas *from any source* and submitting the material as one's own without acknowledging the source by the use of footnotes, quotation marks, or both. (Emphasis added.)

(<http://www.usm.edu/business/academic-integrity-policy>. Last accessed June 2011.)

"[F]rom any source" seemed definitive. Moreover, USM's online plagiarism tutorial explained how to provide citations for quotes or paraphrases.

(www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/whatisplag.php<http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/whatisplag.php>. Last accessed June 2011.)

No exceptions were provided for boilerplate, official administrative communications, or other acts of copying without attribution. COB's Academic Integrity Policy and guidance provided by USM's plagiarism tutorial indicated that Jordan's copying "Guidelines" without attribution violated COB's definition of plagiarism.

The evidence seemed to implicate a serious event, but, from an abundance of caution, colleagues sought further advice. The USM Faculty Handbook provided the following statement of policy and mandate:

SCHOLARLY INTEGRITY The University is dedicated to the discovery and dissemination of truth *in research and in all other scholarly and creative activities*, whether University-sponsored or conducted individually by members of the academic staff, by *administrative officers and staff*, or by students. Hence *plagiarism* or other misconduct in research or in *any other scholarly or creative activity* is strictly prohibited. *Every student and University employee* is responsible not only to abide by the highest standards of integrity and professional ethics themselves but also *to report violations* when they are known or reasonably suspected to have occurred. Alleged breaches of scholarly integrity are investigated promptly and fully by the University... (Italics emphasis added.)

(The University of Southern Mississippi Faculty Handbook, <http://www.usm.edu/provost/>. Last accessed June 2011.)

“**SCHOLARLY INTERGRITY**” also supports the proposition that the “Guidelines” that Jordan copied “without proper citation” were an instance of plagiarism. On the other hand, some colleagues offered an alternative view:

“Guidelines” could be construed as an administrative communication, like attorneys using boilerplate in the practice of law. They proposed an interpretation that “Guidelines” Jordan copied were neither scholarly nor creative. So, it seemed relevant to get the perspectives of administrators and involved faculty.

Colleagues tried to engage USM administrators and the faculty involved in copying the “Guidelines” but to no avail. They refused all efforts to discuss the documents.

Regardless, at this time, one observation was unambiguous. The USM Faculty Handbook admonished “every student and University employee...to report violations when they are known or reasonably suspected to have occurred.” It was also explicit about how to initiate allegations: “Parties having reasonable cause to believe that a University employee or student has committed an act of scholarly misconduct must first consult informally with the University Research Ombudsman.”

(The University of Southern Mississippi Faculty Handbook, <http://www.usm.edu/provost/>. Last accessed June 2011.) The cases are available free at the Social Sciences Research Network (SSRN). See, “Is Accreditation a Reliable Authority on Academic Quality” and “University and AACSB Diversity” available free at <http://ssrn.com/author=397169>